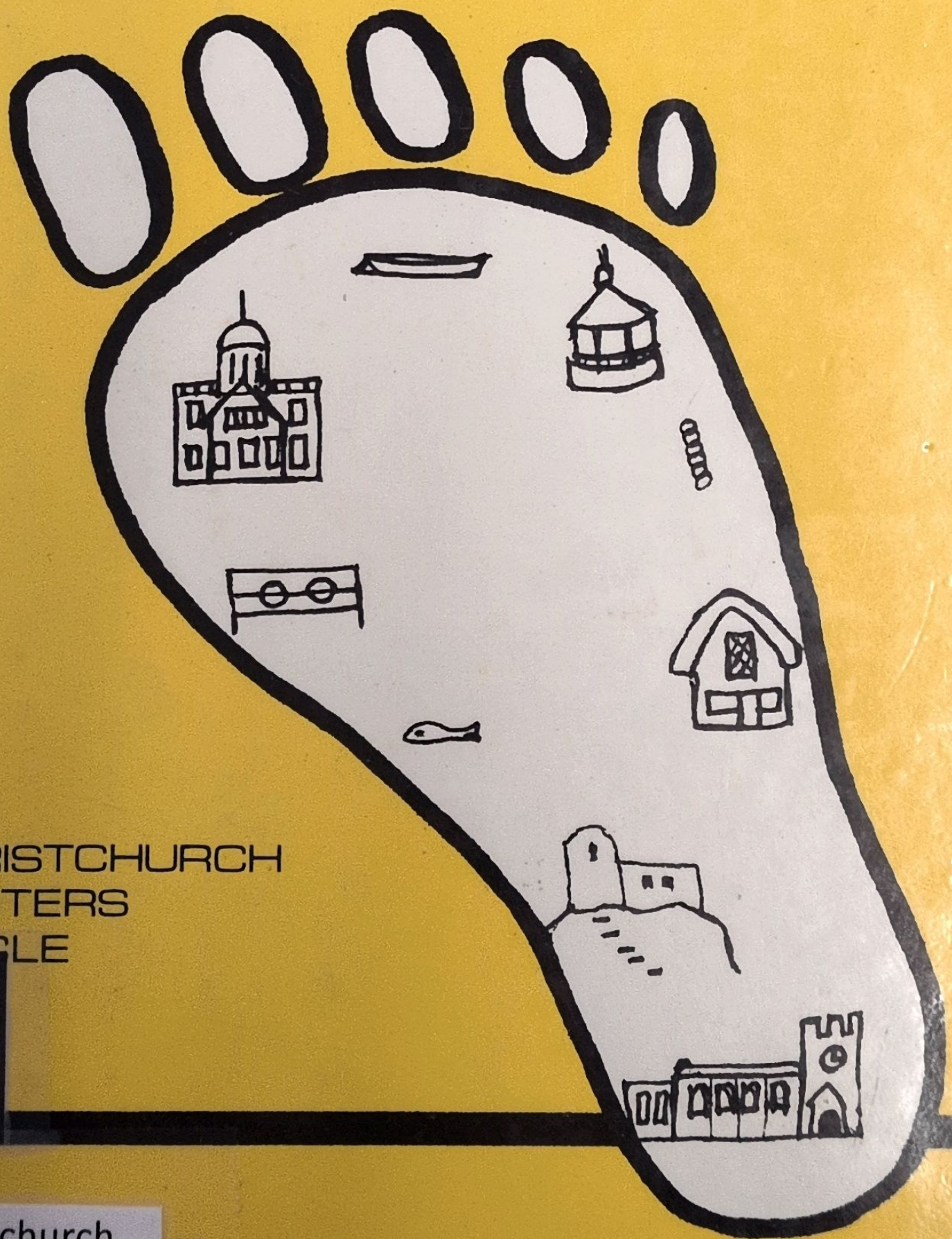


CHRISTCHURCH WALKABOUT



by

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CHRISTCHURCH WALKABOUT

THESE fragments of local history have been compiled by members of the Christchurch Writers' Circle.

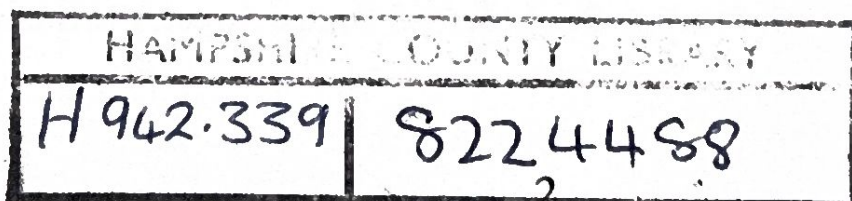
We acknowledge our grateful thanks to everybody who has contributed and helped in a variety of ways.

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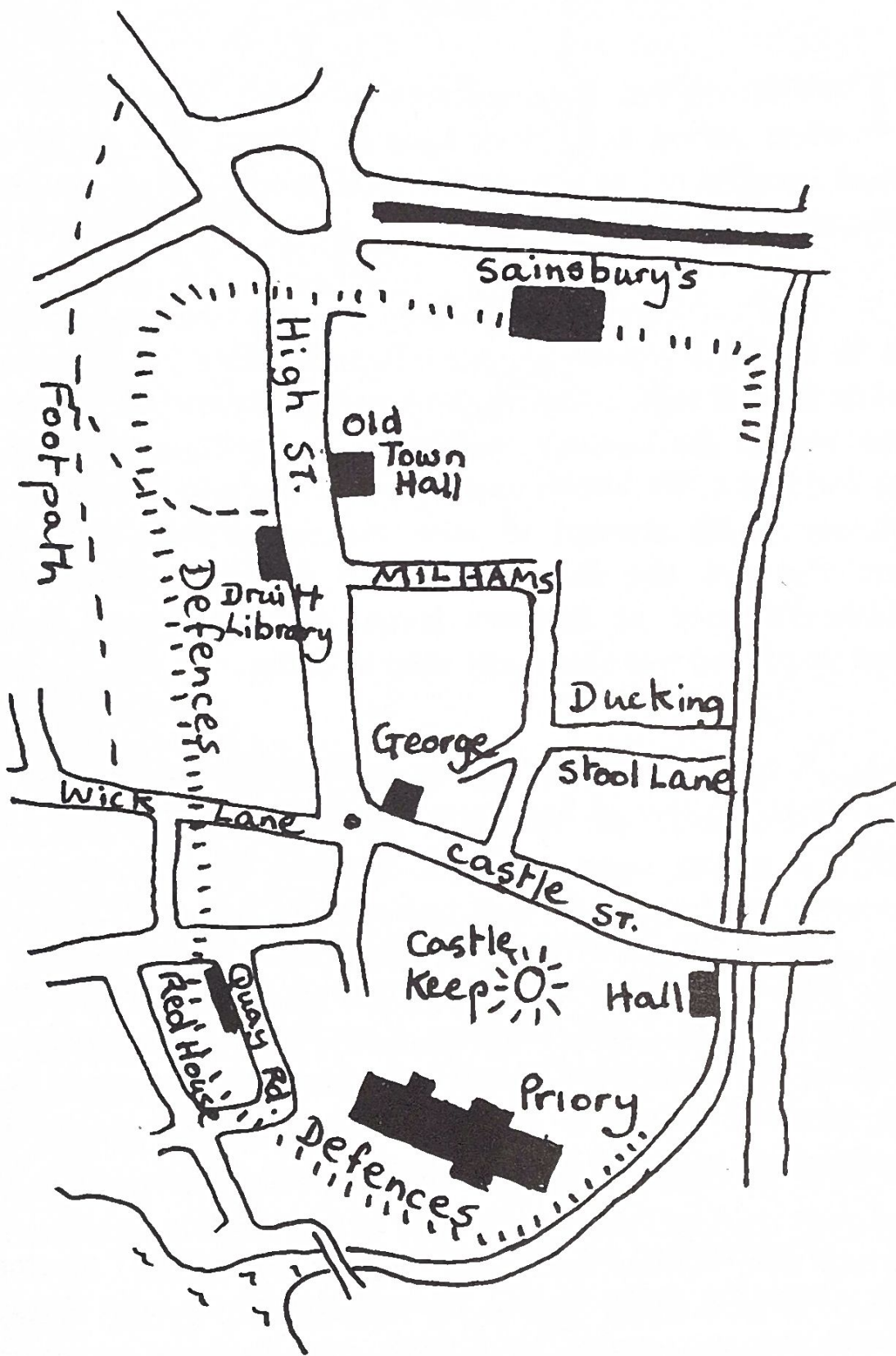
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Defended Christchurch

by

Philip Tate

TWYNHAM has been a defended town since Saxon times, when Alfred the Great, King of Wessex, had an earthwork bank constructed to protect the local people against attacks from Danish sea-raiders.

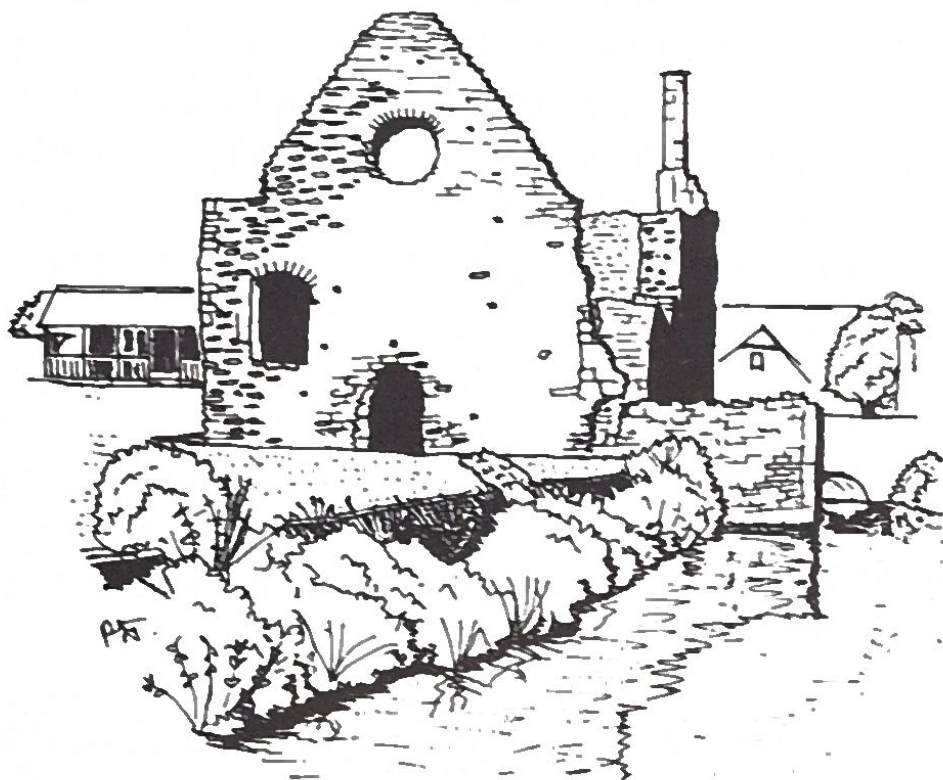
The earliest recorded reference to the town and its defences is in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which was a sort of newspaper of its time. It tells us that, in the year 901, Ethalwald, a noble from the east of the country, succeeded in capturing the earthworks at Twynham. We know, however, that this was Ethalwald's only victory in his attempt to seize the throne from King Alfred's son, Edward the Elder. Ethalwald was later confronted by Edward's army at Badbury Rings, near Wimborne. Ethalwald fled north and was eventually slain in battle.

A brief description of the earthworks can be found on a plaque at the rear of Sainsbury's building. Be careful of car park traffic!

After the Norman conquest most of the town, referred to as Thuinam in the Domesday survey of 1086, was the property of the king. In 1100, however, King Henry 1, the eldest son of William the Conqueror, granted the manor to his cousin, Richard de Redvers. (There is a Redvers Road leading to the Grange Comprehensive School, Somerford).

Richard had an artificial mound, or 'motte', erected on a site near the Avon in full view of the newly-built Priory. The motte was surrounded by a ditch, and the keep, as was typical of the first Norman castles, was built of wood.

Wooden castles were quick to build, easy to defend, but uncomfortable to live in. For this reason a stone house was built



at the foot of the motte near the Mill Stream. Here, the bailiff or constable appointed to take charge of the castle during the Lord of the Manor's frequent absences, could live in relative luxury. This Constable's House had two floors, with the servants living downstairs. Upstairs there are large windows and a huge fireplace with an intriguing round chimney, a novelty at the time. A later improvement was a lavatory, or 'garderobe', which jutted out over the Mill Stream.

The Constable's House, and the other buildings such as storehouses and stables, would have been protected by a rampart and palisade, which would have run along what is now Castle Street and Church Street. The shops and restaurants in these streets are built in what may have been the castle's moat.

The castle was brought into action even before its completion. In the middle of the 12th century Baldwin de Redvers, the new Lord of the Manor, and other Norman barons, used it to

resist King Stephen in the civil war between the King and Empress Matilda who wanted to establish her own son, Henry, as king. In 1153 Stephen's army captured Twynham Castle and Baldwin was taken prisoner, but he escaped, rallied his forces, and retook his castle. The next year Henry II did become king and restored Baldwin's estates to him and, as a reward for his support, made him the Earl of Devon.

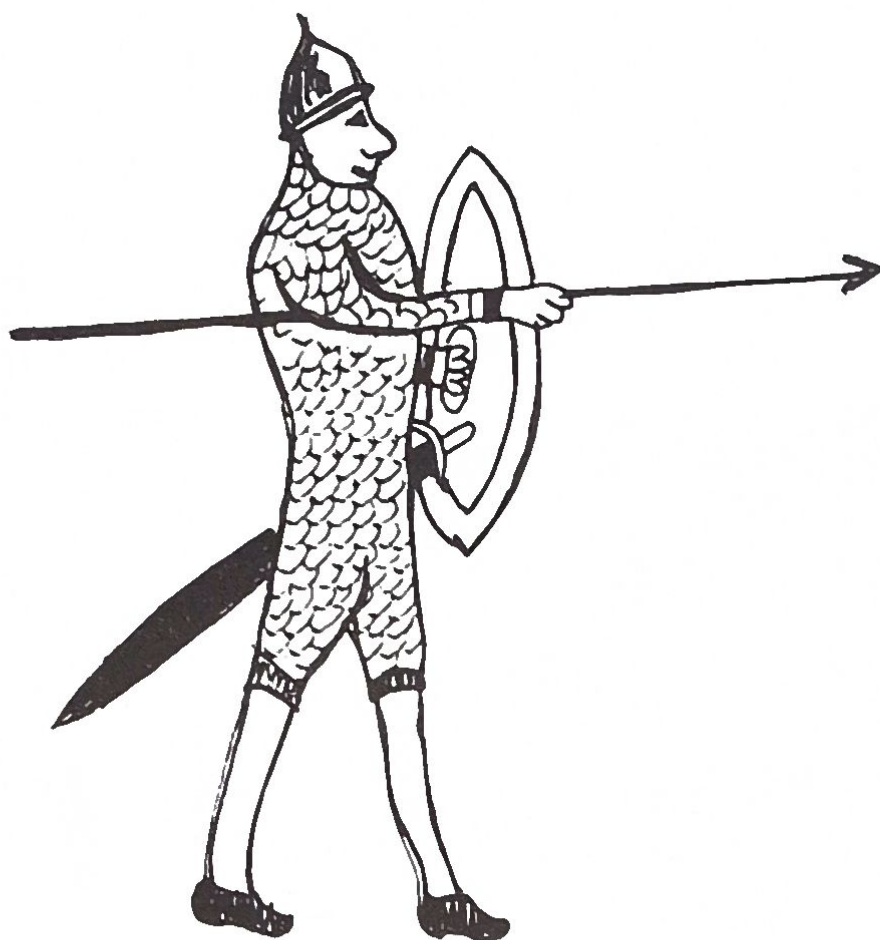
Nearly every king up to the middle of the 16th century visited the castle at least once. King John came ten times in seventeen years and held official court on two occasions. Twynham was probably a convenient stopping place on journeys to his favoured castle at Corfe.

Ironically some of the barons met at Twynham to debate the contents of the Magna Carta, the document that introduced the basic principles of English law, and which John was later forced to approve.

Edward I, John's grandson, became Lord of the Manor and in 1307 he officially issued an order that the castle be securely kept and defended during his absence on foreign wars. The wooden keep was replaced by one of stone, the ruin of which still remains.

A description of how Twynham might have looked in the middle of the 14th century is given in 'The White Company', Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's tale of knightly deeds and chivalry. Despite the fictional Sir Nigel Loring's successes in the French wars, the real castle seems to have slipped into decay. At one time it was described as a cattle pound.

It was the outbreak of the Civil War that saw the castle's return to active service. At the beginning of the war it was held by Royalist troops, but in 1644 a Parliamentary force captured the castle, four hundred prisoners, and one hundred horses

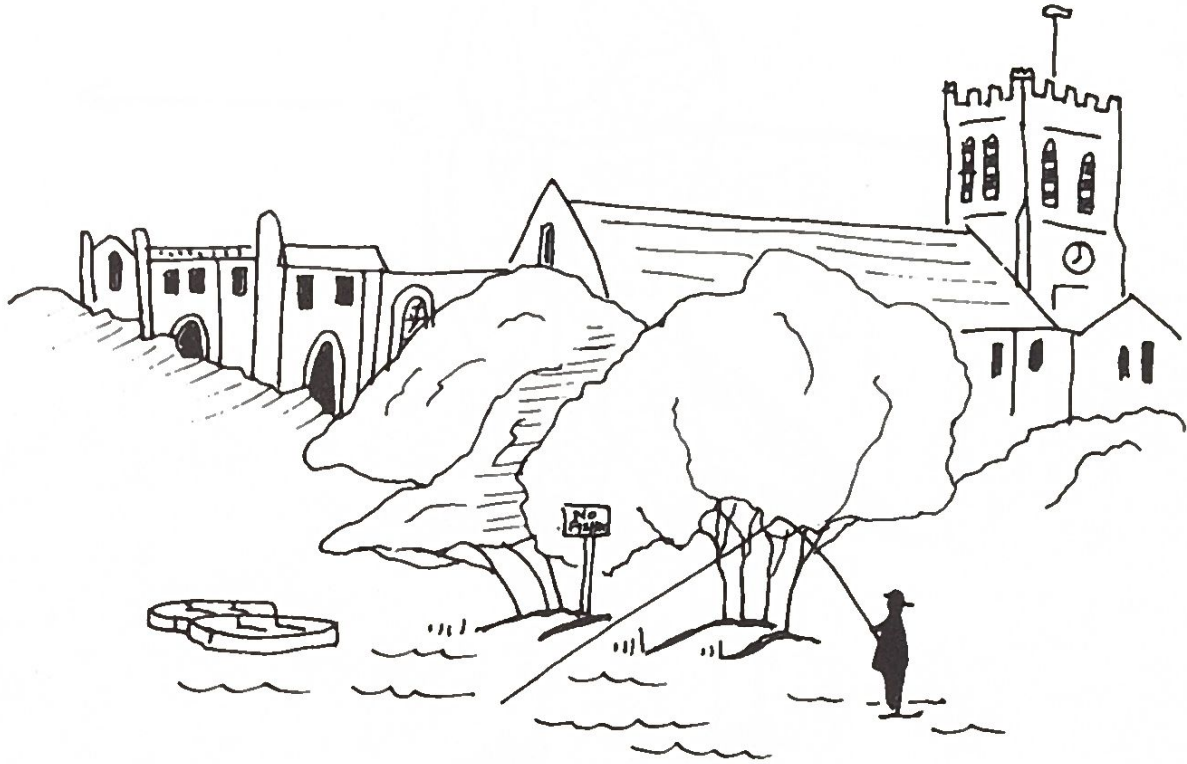


apparently 'without losse of blood', although there is reference to an unnamed Lady Captain who wanted to put up more of a fight.

Later the same year Lord Goring, a Royalist general tried to recapture the town, but his Cavaliers were driven back. A few months later he tried again. This time he managed to push the Roundheads back to the castle and the Priory churchyard, where they withstood a three-day siege. It seems that the Cavaliers only withdrew after a rumour that assistance for the besieged garrison was on its way.

The following year the House of Lords made arrangements to have extra defences sent to Christchurch but, after the execution of Charles 1, Oliver Cromwell's Council of State decided that the castle should be demolished. In 1652 this work was carried out, and with its castle gone, Christchurch lost virtually all its earlier military importance.

The Priory
by
Anne Jabobs



THE Priory is 311 feet long and the tower is 120 feet high. The North porch is unusually fine and large and the beautiful west window depicts the Te Deum.

The fish above the tower represents the famous Christ-church salmon. Early Christians used the fish as a secret sign to identify each other because they were being persecuted. The initial letters of the Greek words "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Saviour," spelt "Icthus," which is the Greek word for fish.

A Norman knight, Flambard, managed to obtain by devious means the revenue from the wealthy Saxon church already established here. Out of rivalry he wanted to build a bigger church. When his friend William Rufus was killed by an arrow in the New Forest, Flambard was imprisoned by the new king, Henry 1, in the Tower of London. He escaped and prudently stayed abroad in Normandy for seven years when, unexpectedly, the king pardoned him. The Church building was finished but the part the

monks used for their daily devotions was destroyed 100 years later when the tower collapsed.

Henry VIII destroyed the surrounding monastery but allowed the town to keep its church, because the last Prior, John Draper, was honest with the church commissioners.

Some of the Church treasure may have been buried and never yet found.

Margaret, Countess of Salisbury wished to be buried within her chantry in the church. But her son Cardinal Pole safely in Rome, condemned Henry VIII as an adulterer, and in retaliation, the king imprisoned Margaret, though she was nearly 80, and executed her as a traitor. She refused to kneel at the block and she was beheaded standing up, and was buried in the chapel at the Tower of London. So her chantry does not contain her bones.

The poet, Shelley, has a lovely monument here because St. Peter's Church, Bournemouth, where his heart is buried, would not find room for it.

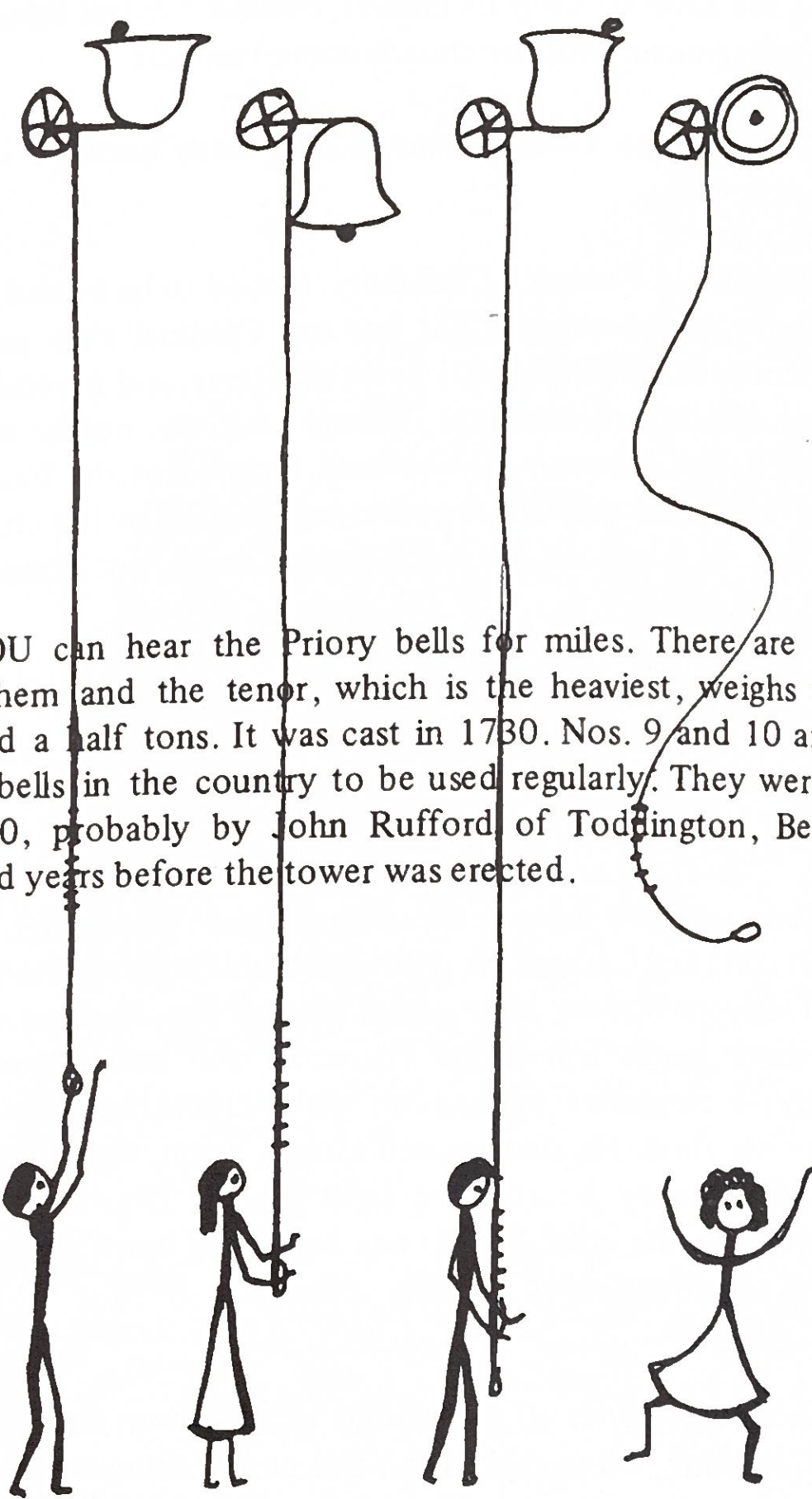
There are two legends about the Priory. The church was to be built on St. Catherine's Hill but building materials were mysteriously moved by night to its present site. Perhaps the old pagan earth magic feared the vigour of the new Christianity. Secondly, a carpenter worked on the building but never drew wages or ate food. He disappeared after a beam, found to be too short, miraculously became the right length. The beam is now placed high in the roof, for it was becoming worn away where countless pilgrims scraped off holy splinters.

There are stories of the sound of chanting, and even the smell of cooking, when there is no-one and nothing there. Maybe the dispossessed monks never quite left their beloved home.

The Priory Bells

by

Susan Newell



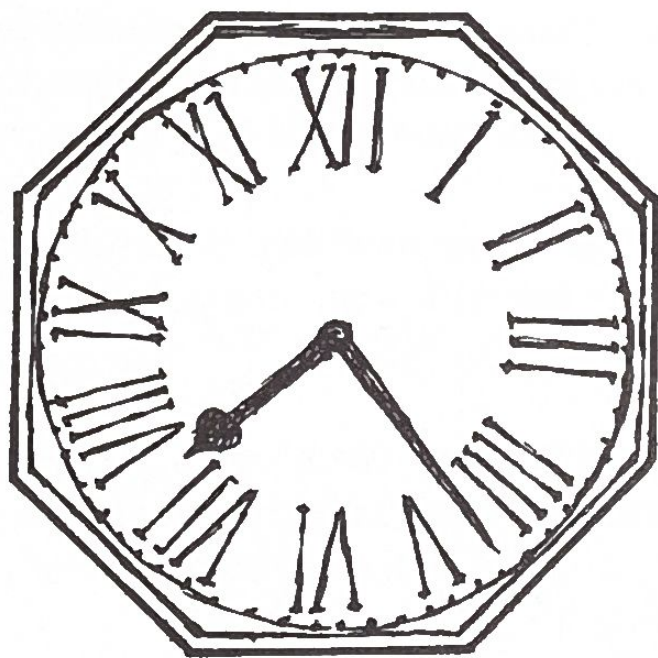
YOU can hear the Priory bells for miles. There are 13 of them and the tenor, which is the heaviest, weighs about one and a half tons. It was cast in 1730. Nos. 9 and 10 are the oldest bells in the country to be used regularly. They were cast in 1370, probably by John Rufford of Toddington, Beds., a hundred years before the tower was erected.

The Priory Clock

by

Susan Newell

THE clock was built in 1837. Although it is wound mechanically, using little electric motors to pull up the weights, an expert comes every week to regulate it. He does this by making slight alterations to the weight of the pendulum. One penny will make a difference of one second a week.



The Tombstone of Henry Rogers

by

Anne Jacobs

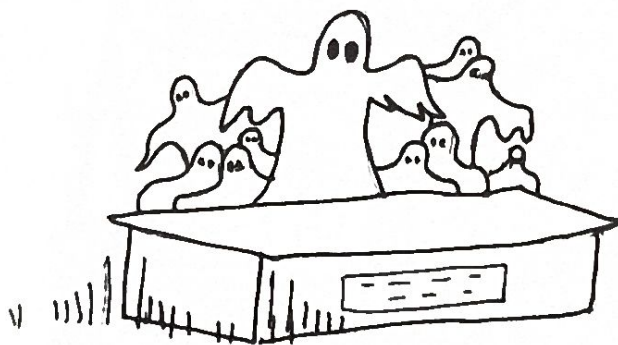
THERE is an unusual inscription on a coffin-shaped tombstone to the right of the main path facing the Priory porch:—

“We were not slayne but raysd
Raysd not to life
But to be buried twice
By men of strife
What rest could th’ living have
When dead had none
Agree amongst you
Here we ten are one.
Hen: Rogers died April 17 — 1641.”

The years before 1649, when King Charles 1 was beheaded, were full of disquiet, with many innocent people being executed for treason. Also, there was a Commission issued by the Commons in 1641 to ‘deface, and demolish church images, altars and monuments.’

So Hen: Rogers may have died peacefully but his tomb was broken open, together with nine others, by order of Parliament, to be re-buried later.

Another possibility is that his lead coffin was dug up to be used for bullets in the Civil War.



The Almoner's Wall

by

Roland Bruning

THE old wall opposite Priory Cottage is possibly part of the Almoner's house, where poor people would receive their dole of bread and ale.

At one time there were 6 breweries, 16 inns and 26 beer houses within the borough, because well-water was frequently unsafe, due to seepage from sewage.

The Red House Museum

by

Kay Williams

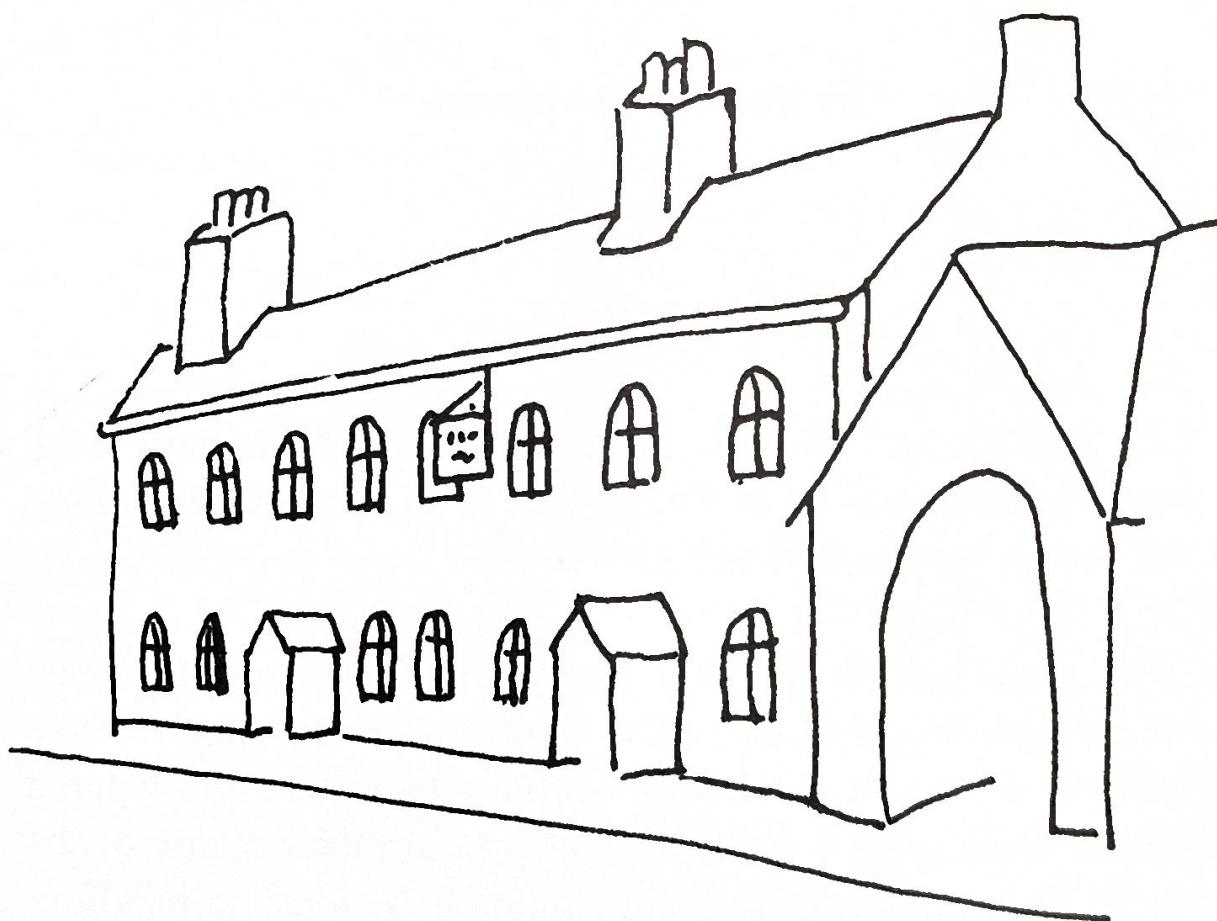
THE Red House Museum, Art Gallery and Gardens were opened to the public in 1951. This is an interesting museum and well worth the modest entrance fee.

The main part of the Red House was built over 200 years ago for a Parish Workhouse by the Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor. It served the needs of the area until 1886 when a new Union Workhouse had to be built in Fairmile because of the growth of Bournemouth and the increase in local population. This is now Christchurch Hospital.

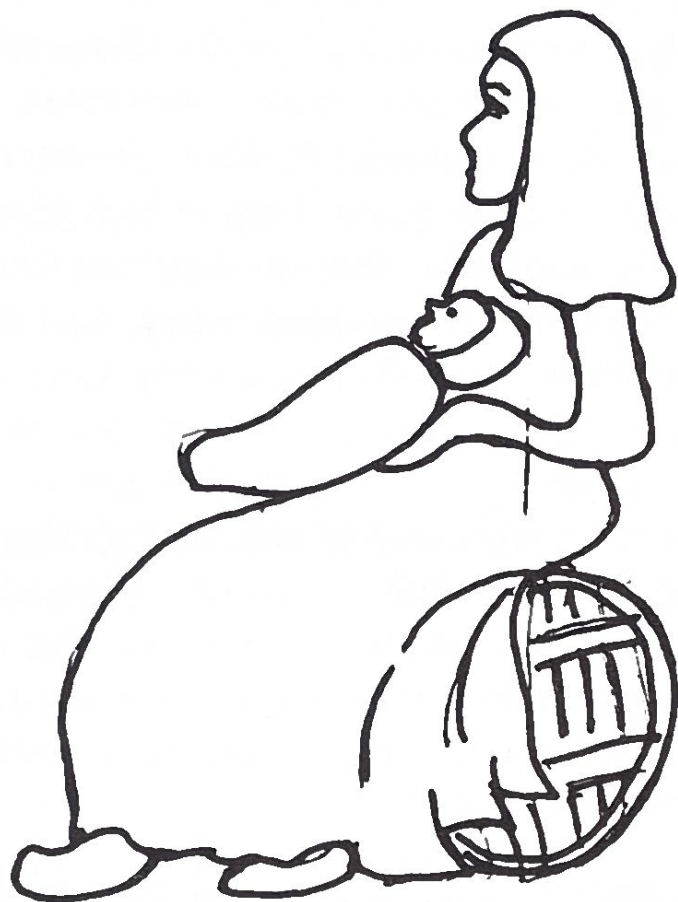
The Reverend T. Bush, Vicar of Christchurch, bought the old Workhouse, using it as a private residence, and calling it 'The Red House'. He demolished the women's wards and built stables, coach house and harness room in their place. These have been converted into the present Art Gallery and Picture store.

In 1909 the property was sold to Mrs. Matilda Jane Druitt, who later gave it to her son Herbert. His collection of specimens and books form the backbone of the Museum and Reference Library. The family also provided Christchurch with the Druitt Library and Gardens off the High Street.

If you go into the Natural History Room on the second floor you will see the heavy crooked beams which are probably re-used ship's timbers. Outside this room there is a glass panel in the ceiling, showing how reeds were used to make a bed for the plaster.



The Eight Bells
by
Thetis Cunliffe



THE Eight Bells, at the top of Church Street, dates from 1450. Originally called the Eighth Bell, it may have had an early connection with the Priory, but for most of its recorded history it has been an Inn and in 1792 had its own brewery at the rear of the building.

Like all our old inns it had its historic connections with smugglers. One legend tells us that warning was given when the revenue men (as the customs officers were called) were coming to search the inn for contraband. Most of it was quickly removed but a keg of brandy was overlooked. A quick-witted woman sat down on the keg, shook out her long skirts to hide it and began to bath her young baby. When the officers arrived they saw that she was busy and courteously allowed her to carry on whilst they searched. Naturally they found nothing and were forced to leave empty-handed.

The Bus Turntable

by

John Greaves

THE 20th April, 1969, was a sad day for those who loved the medley of clicks and hums that orchestrated the ride to Christchurch, from Bournemouth, in the upholstered grace of those yellow, electric, trolley buses. They were replaced by diesel motor buses, so no more the fun of watching the conductor hooking up the poles to the overhead wires, and no more the excitement of watching the trolley bus being turned around on the turntable.

The turntable, an ingenuity of cast iron gliding on a bed of gears and bearings, hides behind the new brick parade where the brash, bright, craft shops cluster. It was by the disreputable Dolphin alehouse, adjoining a long, narrow newsagents, crammed with plastic toys and saucy postcards. Both buildings were demolished for new development.



In 1905 the trams could travel easily in either direction on their rails. The driver simply reversed the seats on reaching the terminus and re-positioned the overhead conductor poles. But in 1936, when the trams were pensioned off, the new trolley buses would have needed a huge circular track of wires to enable them to return to Bournemouth. Christchurch was too cramped for such a merry-go-round so the engineers had the brilliant notion of using a turntable, just as steam engines used to be guided on to track turntables, to turn them round to face the way they had come.

You can see the turntable through the arch behind the Coffee shop; it lies disused and unnecessary like so many other past glories of British engineering. And diesel buses thunder through the town, over the bridges to Somerford. Perhaps if electricity is used once again to power cars and buses the turntable may yet outlive the shiny shops that surround it today.

The Old Court House

by

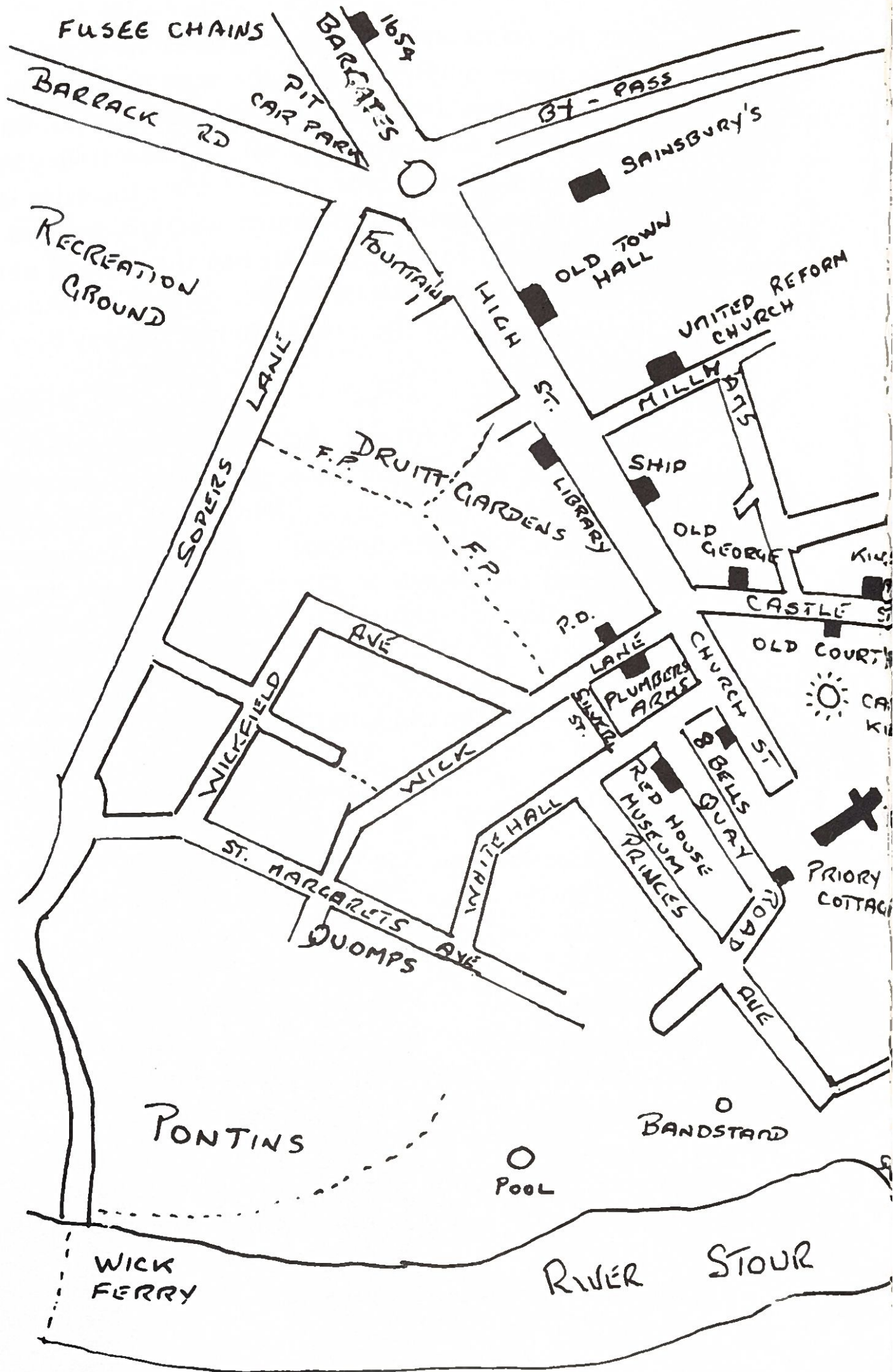
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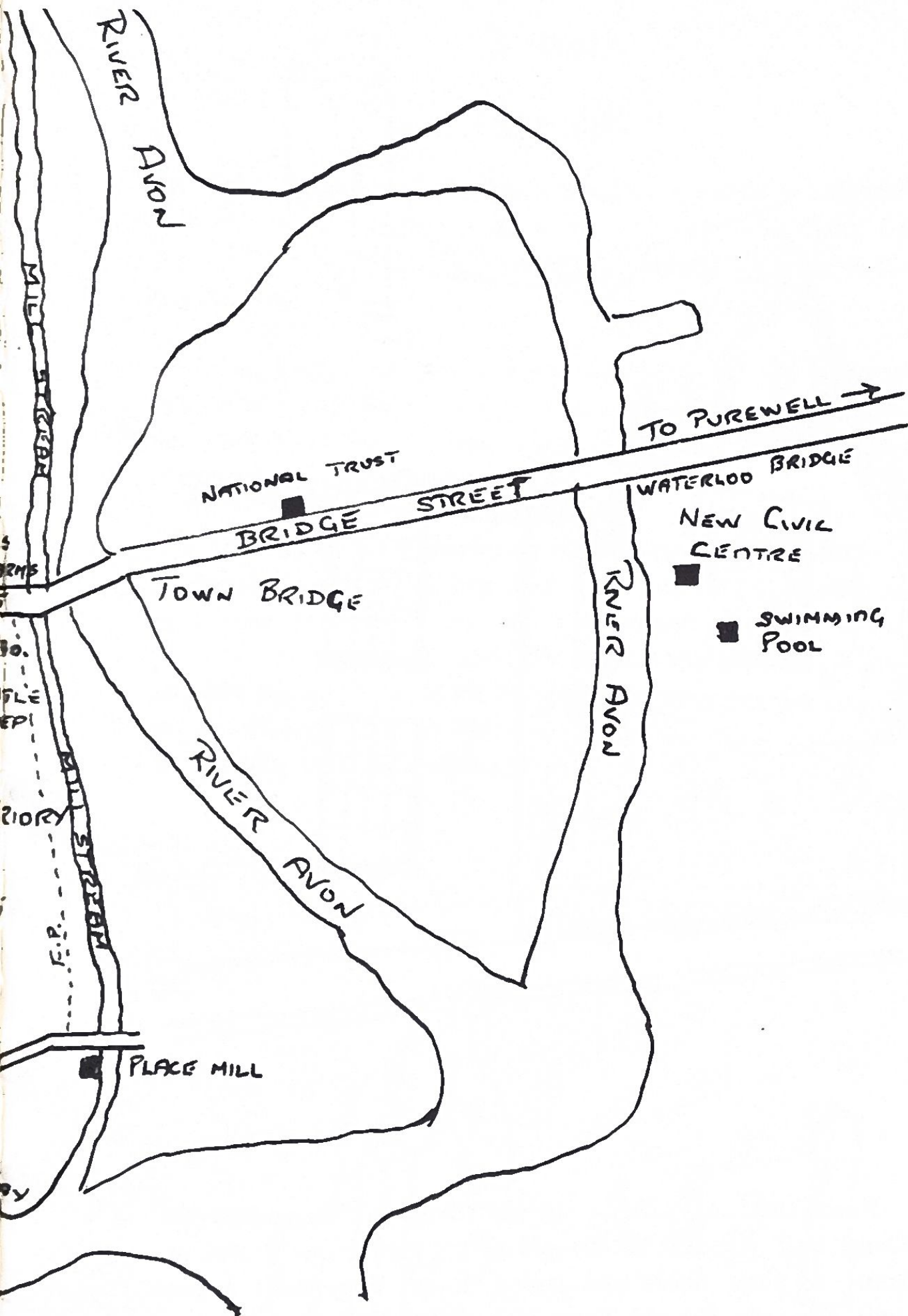
THE origins of this building can be traced back to the 13th century. The timbers on the side walls are very old, possibly medieval, but the pretty wooden front is late Victorian.

The Court Leets were held here. These dealt with minor offences and also matters concerning the economy of the manor, like the appointment of officers to act as Bread-weighers, Ale-tasters and Inspectors of Chimneys and Mantles.

The court was also responsible for the management of the Manor common land, and the fishing rights in Mudeford Run.

The Court Leet was discontinued in 1920.







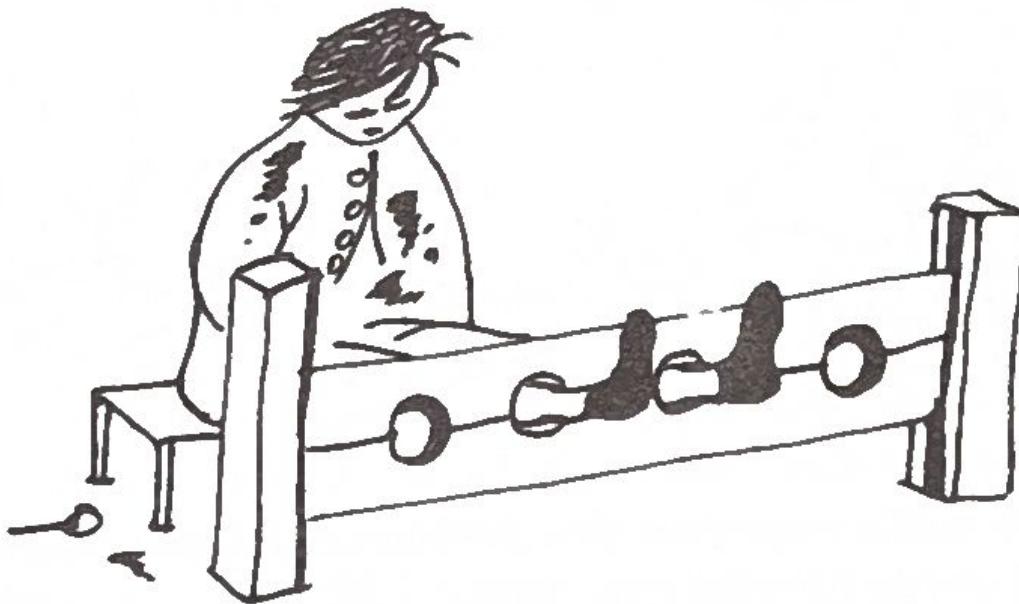
From 1830 to 1837 the Hengist Lodge of Freemasons met in 'Court Hall' adjacent to the old Court House but it was inadequate to their needs and pulled down. They built a new 'Temple' opposite the old Town Hall in the High Street, where a solicitor is now in practice.

The Stocks
by
Meta Riba

A grim reminder of the harsh penalties inflicted to enforce the law in bygone days can be found at the castle gates. These stocks are a modern replica erected by Michael Hodges when he was mayor.

We know the stocks were used at the time of the great plague in 1665, for anyone who neglected their duties to watch for, and ward off any newcomer who might bring the plague into the town.

It was at the castle gates that miscreants were chained by a special constable, pending their trial. Any honest citizen could raise 'hue and cry' if she saw a suspicious character acting in peculiar circumstances, and the poor beggar was caught and chained up until he could be dealt with. During their time on public display prior to imprisonment or execution they served as warning to others who might be tempted to break the law.



The Mausoleum and Garderobe

by

Susan Newell

IN the gardens to the north east of the Priory is Mrs. Perkin's mausoleum. This lady had a horror of being buried alive. When she died in 1783 her unfastened coffin was placed in this special tomb which could be opened from the inside.

Follow the little path to the east of the Priory and you will see some very old stonework down by the water. Behind an iron grille are the remains of a 12th century garderobe. This was a medieval loo consisting of a plank with holes in it supported above a stream.

The Mill Stream

by

Anne Jacobs

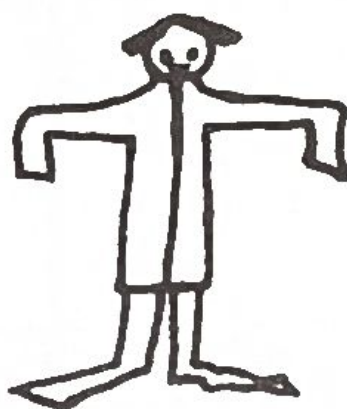
IT was the miller's responsibility to clear weed from the man-made mill stream, and to repair the hatches. The gradient of this canal is to control the flow of water to the mill. The miller also had to stop illegal fishing and prevent shepherds from washing their sheep in it.



On this stream there is a gin door, or salmon trap, with a channel leading from the river Avon.

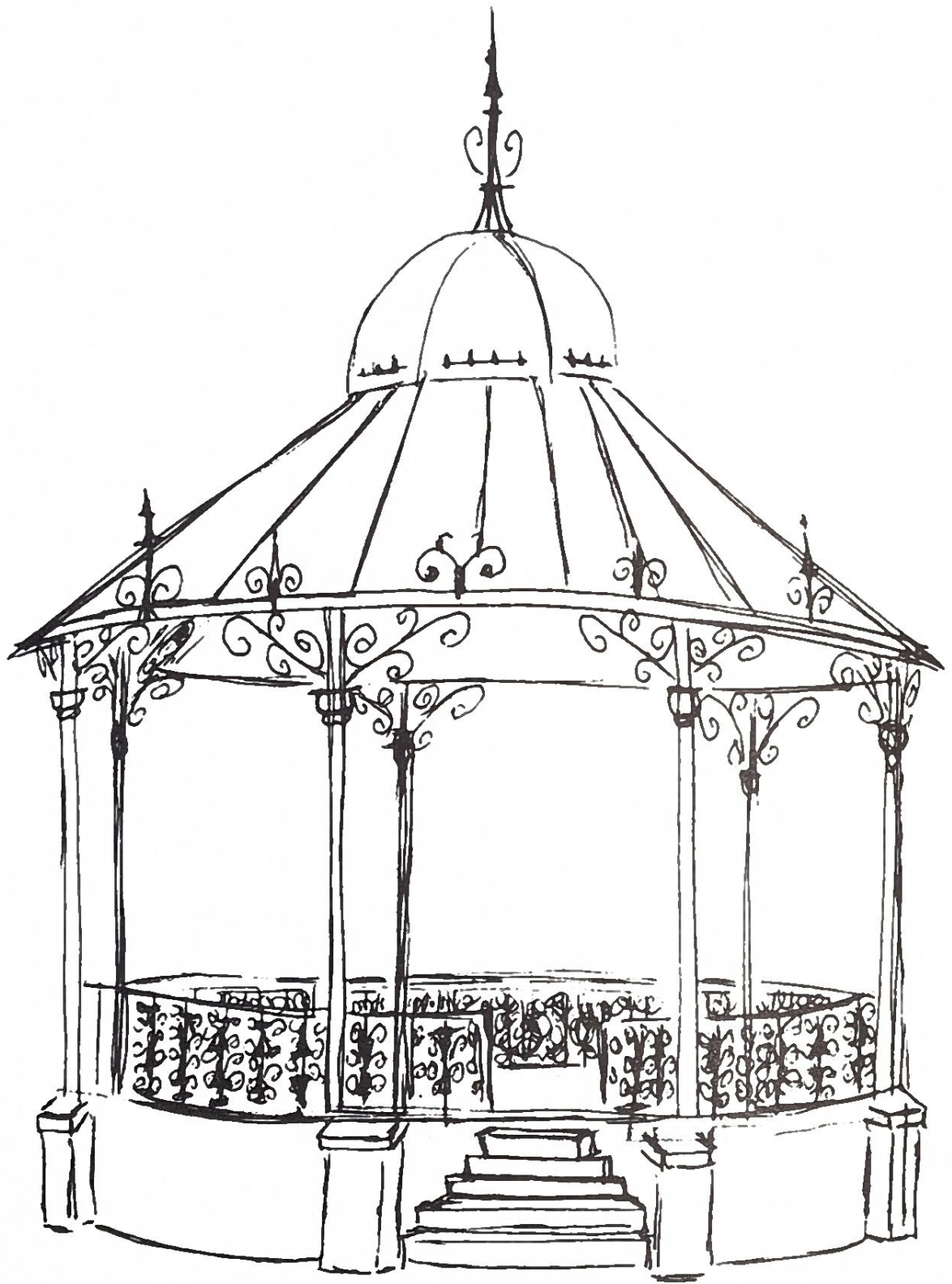
Place Mill
by
Anne Jacobs

PLACE Mill was valued at 30 pence in the Domesday Book. It was used for grinding corn and probably also for 'fulling' wool. Local sheep's wool was spun and woven as a cottage industry and brought to this mill, where clear water and Fuller's earth processed the cloth, removing grease and thickening and shrinking the wool. The nap of the cloth was raised by a revolving drum of teasles driven by water power. Then the cloth was ready to make overcoats and suits.



Near the quay is the miller's house, built in 1880. The mill finished its working life in 1908 and the last miller was Mr. Cox.

The Bandstand
by
Anne Jacobs



THE bandstand was donated 'anonymously' by David Llewellyn, general manager of the West Hants Water Company. He was an intrepid Welshman and if you applied for a job on the water board it was greatly to your advantage if you could play a brass instrument.

The Horse Trough

by

Anne Jacobs

THE horse trough is in memory of Samuel Beminster, seven times mayor of Christchurch between 1876 and his death in office in May, 1899. It used to stand at the Fountain roundabout, and it once had a wrought iron design on it that has been stolen. The trough is now to be seen at Quomps.

The Recreation Ground

by

Kay Williams

BETWEEN Sopers Lane and Barrack Road is the recreation ground, all that is left of the 290 acre Port Field which lay outside the Town gate and was cultivated by the townspeople.



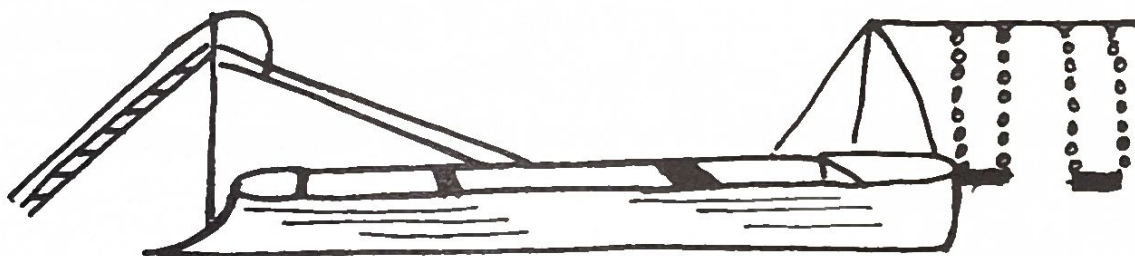
Part of the gardens were set aside for the cultivation of various New Zealand shrubs, which were a gift from the City of Christchurch, New Zealand.

Lady of Medina

by

Kay Williams

IN the children's corner by the swings and roundabouts is an old river launch. Nowadays it provides hours of fun for the local youngsters, but once it was the proud 'Lady of Medina'. An elegant slipper boat, so-called because of her shape, her beautiful cabin had large glass windows to enable her passengers to view the passing scenery. It is probable that originally she sailed the Thames, where this style of launch was widely used. However, the 'Lady of Medina' came to Christchurch from the Isle of Wight. Her cabin was removed and for many years, in the company of a similar craft, she carried holiday-makers on the River Stour.



Fusee Watch Chains

by

Kay Williams

THE French Huguenots, exiled in 1685, brought the art of watch chain-making to this country. Women and girls stamped out and rivetted the tiny links together without any aid to the naked eye, although the three layers of links, each with their two rivets, made a chain thin enough to pass through the eye of a needle. The total thickness of a chain made in Christchurch measured no more than 14 thousandths of an inch. The chain wound round a spindle rather like the gears on a bicycle and ensures that the power from the unwinding spring remains constant.

Mr. Robert Cox, a clock and watchmaker, introduced the manufacture of fusee chains to Christchurch during the latter part of the 18th century. He established a small workshop behind his house in the High Street next door to the Ship. His main sources of labour were from the workhouses in the surrounding districts. (In 1807, Dr. Goddard was paid £24 for inoculating 96 paupers, and coffins were 7 shillings each).

William Hart built a chain-making factory next door to his house in Bargates, just past the Conservative Club and garage. The factory was very advanced for its time because the long building had large windows, to let in the maximum of light. The special long windows can also still be seen on the first floor of Magnolia House, Purewell.

Christchurch fusee chains were supplied exclusively to watchmakers in London, Liverpool, Coventry and Birmingham. Eventually Swiss watchmakers invented an escape mechanism that did not need a fusee chain.

Find out more about fusee chain-making - the hours, the wages and the ages of the girls employed - from the Red House Museum.

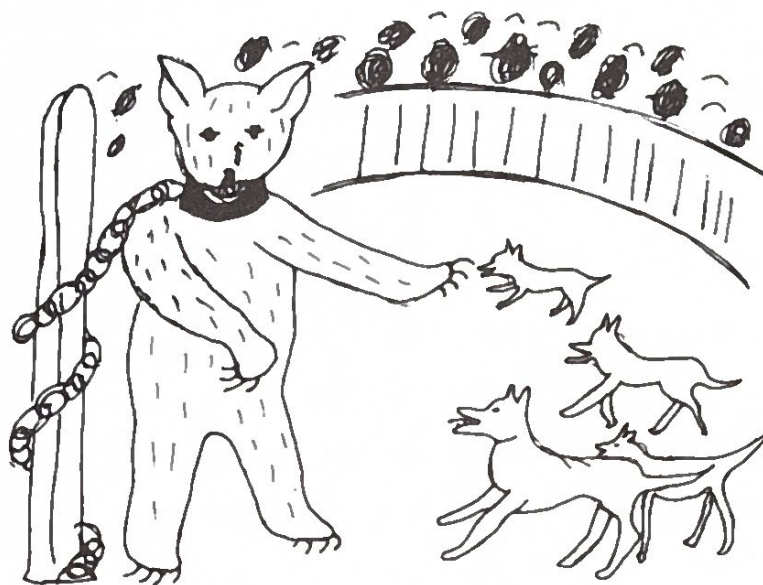


Actual size of chain

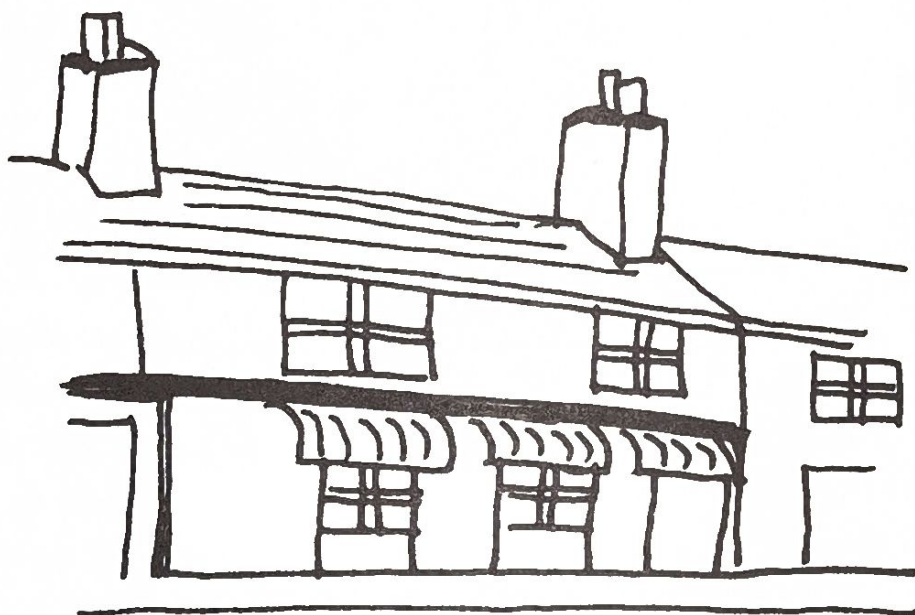


Links

1654, The Horse and Groom, and the Pit Car Park
by
Anne Jacobs



IN a corner of the Horse and Groom is a cement filled hole. At one time there was a post here with a chain attached. This was where a bear was kept before it was taken across to the pit, where cars park now, and the cruel sport of bear-baiting took place, dogs jumping up and biting the bear, to aggravate it. This was forbidden by law in 1835.



In the 1654 Restaurant part of the original wall is on view protected behind glass, and the original charter or deeds can also be seen.

The United Reform Church

by

Anne Jacobs

THE United Reform Church was opened in 1867. The old church on the same site was demolished the year before. There has been an Independent Congregational Chapel on this site since 1660.

An adventurous boy called Seymour slipped unnoticed into the old building while the demolition gang of workmen were away having their lunch. Unfortunately a wall fell on Seymour and he lost his leg. He spent many years in the workhouse because he couldn't get a job.

Millham's Tragedy

by

Margaret Gamble

'T WAS on a sunny August afternoon
I stepped aside from High Street's crowd and noise
Into the churchyard. Walking down the path
My eyes fell on a grave - a little boy's.
In sixteen-ninety-two this boy was drowned
At Millham's bridge beside the Castle Keep,
And to the Priory Churchyard they did take
His little body for his last long sleep.
When I was young we children paused to see
The tombstone of this child who was eleven
And we were warned, "Beware of Millham's Bridge
or you will be before your time in Heaven!"
But now, a Mother, I feel it was sad
Those seventeenth century parents lost their lad.

The Midland Bank

by

Joan Hartley

I feel we must record another well-known personage who resided in the borough of Christchurch, none other than Mr. Gordon Selfridge, the founder owner of the large, London store called Selfridges, in Oxford Street.

He owned Hengistbury Head and had a banking account with the Midland Bank in Christchurch.

The bank manager at the time decided to honour their illustrious customer, and the pillars and imposing facade were designed for this reason.

The Old Town Hall

by

Kay Williams

IN 1859 the old Town Hall was moved from its original position at the junction of Church Street and Castle Street to its present site in the High Street. It was rebuilt using the old materials and the cupola. The arcade, which had been used as a market, was filled in to form rooms on the ground floor and the big hall was added. Later the Christchurch Technical Schools were built onto the back as a memorial to Queen Victoria. Then they were used as administrative offices.

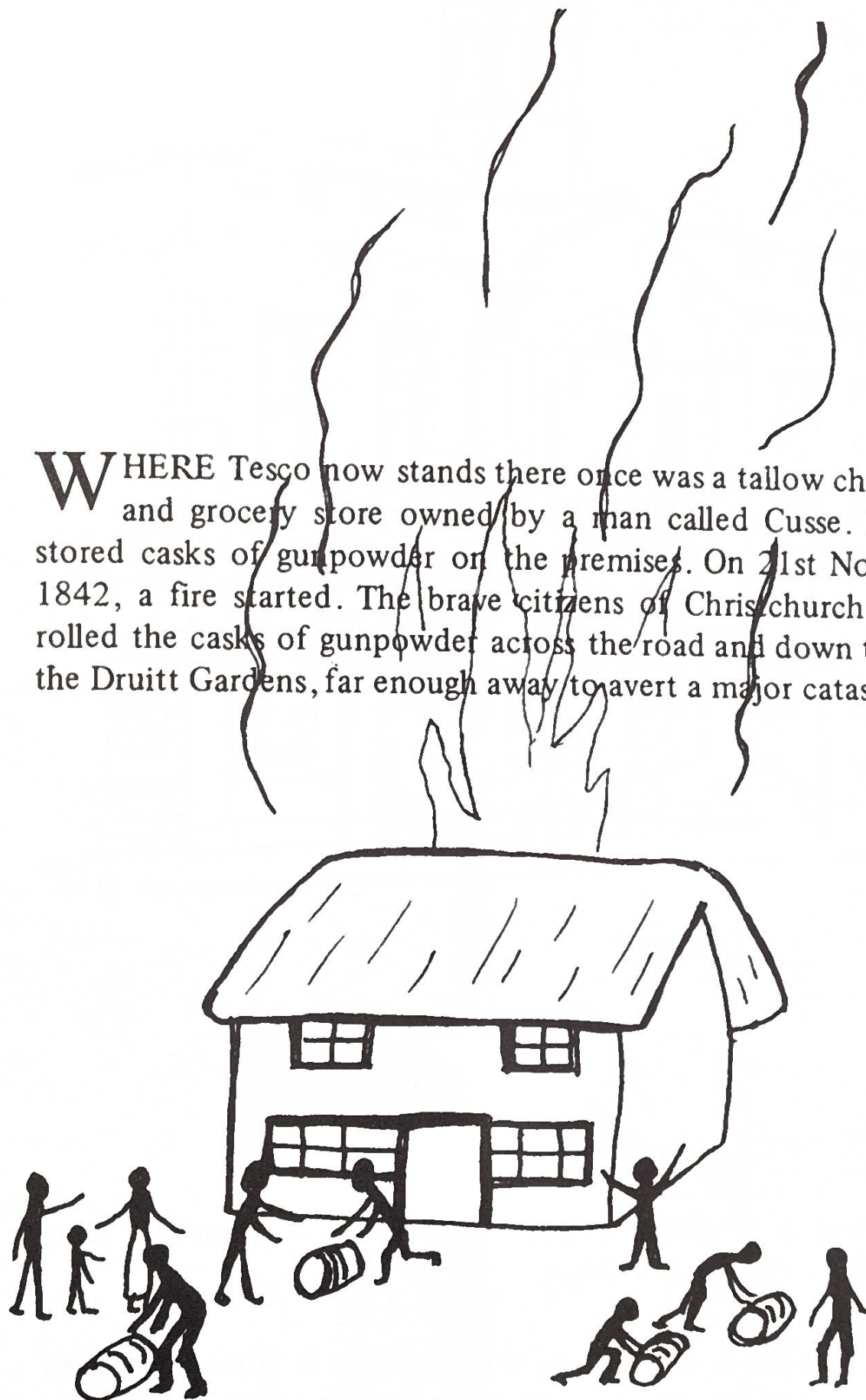


There is a plaque inside the front door commemorating Queen Elizabeth's visit in 1966.

At the time of writing, this building is threatened with demolition to make way for new shops and a market.

Tesco
by
Anne Jacobs

WHERE Tesco now stands there once was a tallow chandler's and grocery store owned by a man called Cusse. He also stored casks of gunpowder on the premises. On 21st November 1842, a fire started. The brave citizens of Christchurch hastily rolled the casks of gunpowder across the road and down through the Druitt Gardens, far enough away to avert a major catastrophe.



The Old George

by

A. Syndicate

THIS is a coaching inn where horses were changed on the long journey from London to Weymouth.

Victoria visited here before she became Queen. Smugglers traded tobacco, brandy and gin here, probably brought through an underground tunnel leading up from the river.

Some of the stones in the building are ironstone, probably taken from Christchurch Castle, originally quarried on Hengist-bury Head.

Outside the inn stood the Market Cross and the market flourished even before the town was officially granted permission to have one, in 1250.



King's Arms
by
Yvonne Fox

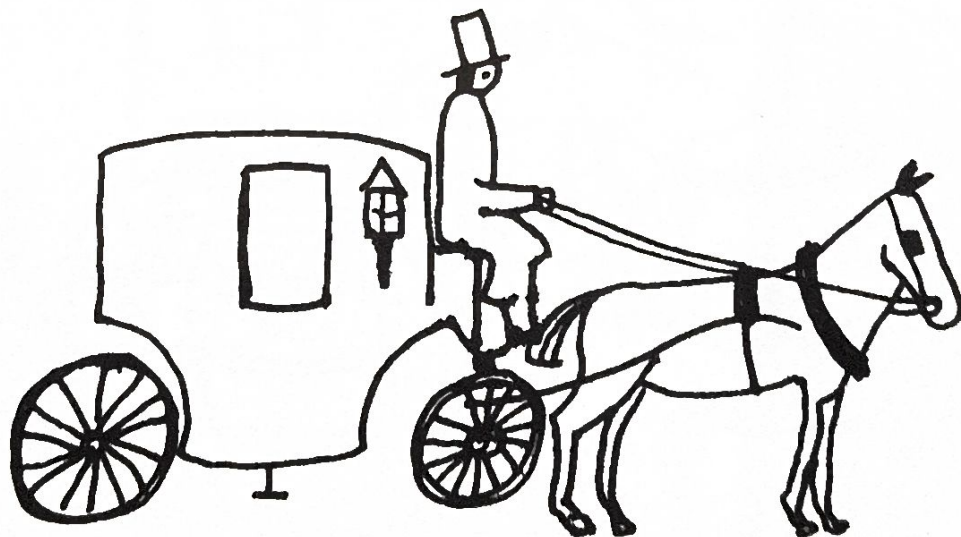
THE King's Arms Hotel was originally a coaching inn that served travellers on the road from the West Country to Portsmouth. It dates from about 1700 and reed panelling is behind wallpaper in some of the upstairs bedrooms. A tie-up block for horses stands to the side of the hotel. Previously it was known as the Commercial Hotel and also as Humby's.

It boasts an interesting visitor's book with comments. Some notable guests were Marlborough and Churchill. The Duke of Edinburgh paid the hotel a visit in 1949 and more recently it was used as a base for the celebrities who took part in the television programme 'Stars on Sunday' which was filmed in the Priory.

In the days before electoral reform, results were announced from the balcony and halfpennies distributed to those gathered below. Free beer was available to all-comers.

The bowling green opposite is also part of the hotel property though now leased to the Corporation. Once, teas were served in these pleasant grounds.

Notices showing the hotel ownership may still be found.



Town Bridge and Waterloo Bridge

by
Anne Jacobs

THE townspeople were granted indulgences (forgiveness of sins) if they helped build and repair the bridges. Both have been widened several times and have had different names - Mew's and Radford's. In 1899, the old Norman Bridge was only 16 feet wide. The mayor, William Tucker, together with Ald. S. Bemister and Ald. Marshall (editor of the Christchurch Times) raised money and persuaded the County Council to widen both bridges.

The rivers were frozen over in 1841. A fire was lit on the ice and a fat sheep was roasted. Again in 1855 it was possible to skate from the Barracks to Mudeford, except where the Wick ferryman had broken the ice for the boat to cross. Shops were shut for an hour at midday to allow everybody to skate. People rode their ponies on the ice.

The River Avon is an unusual example of a river freezing upwards. In parts of it ice begins to form on the bottom before the top is frozen over.



Christchurch Printing Company

by

Anne Jacobs

THIS old building in Bridge Street was once a Post Office. The Christchurch Times newspaper was started in June, 1855 when Parliament lifted the heavy tax on newspapers. During the 1914 - 18 war, because newsprint (paper) was scarce and became unobtainable, the title of the newspaper was bought and conserved to prevent anyone else using it. Production was re-started in 1928 and has continued ever since without interruption because, during the Second World War newsprint was more fairly rationed.

The New Civic Centre

.by

Anne Jacobs

THE new Civic Centre in Bridge Street was designed by Cheshire Robbins and opened by Prince and Princess Michael of Kent, on 17th April, 1980.

In 1979 the Mayor of Christchurch was showing a Councillor of Christchurch, New Zealand, round the half-finished building. Our mayor narrowly escaped death when a large roof tile crashed down to within inches of where he was standing and fell against him.

On the way to Poole Hospital for a check-up, a car crashed into the wing of his hired Rover.

If there was a third mishap it is unrecorded.

